

VZCZCXYZ0004  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0196/01 0510741  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 200741Z FEB 09  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0952  
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 8937  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0387

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000196

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS  
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SECRETARY CLINTON'S ASIA TRIP

**¶1.** Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused February 20 news coverage on Taiwan's sagging economy, on the on-going investigation into the corruption case against former President Chen Shui-bian and his family, on the possibility of signing a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) between Taiwan and China, and on the results of the recently-held college entrance exam island-wide. Nearly all major Chinese-language papers reported on a "New York Times" story Wednesday, which quoted U.S. Pacific Commander Admiral Timothy Keating as saying in Hong Kong that he is willing to invite military officials of China and Taiwan to the U.S. Pacific Command in Hawaii to have talks.

**¶2.** In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's recent remarks on the cross-Strait situation and said that "the 'peace in the Taiwan Strait' welcomed by the United States is by no means the 'peaceful unification' claimed by China, nor is it the 'false appearance of peace' that President Ma intends to trade at the expense of [Taiwan] losing its economic independence and political autonomy." An op-ed piece in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" written by an American commentator discussed Clinton's Asia trip and said, "her decision to make her first overseas trip to Asia, particularly China, was a smart one and, if done with aplomb, could yield enormous returns for the administration of US President Barack Obama as it attempts to re-establish world leadership." End summary.

A) "We Want Peace, not 'Peaceful Unification' That Deprives [Ourselves of Our] Sovereignty"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 700,000] editorialized (2/20):

"Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chu is currently on a visit in the United States at the invitation of the State Department. Chen said in Washington D.C. that U.S. officials noted positively the warming [relations] across the Taiwan Strait. The United States does not want to be forcibly dragged into conflicts between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and is pleased to see alleviated tensions in the Taiwan Strait, [Chen added,] but Washington also attaches importance to the opinions of Taiwan's opposition parties. ...

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is currently on a visit in Asia, pointed out that the United States supports and encourages mitigated tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Yet Clinton also unequivocally emphasized that articles in the Taiwan Relations Act clearly demand that the United States provide support for Taiwan's defense. This indicates that the 'peace in the Taiwan Strait' welcomed by the United States is by no means the 'peaceful unification' claimed by China, nor is it the 'false appearance of peace' that President Ma intends to trade at the expense of [Taiwan] losing its economic independence and political autonomy. Rather, the message released by the United States is closer to what Mayor Chen meant when she said the price for alleviated tensions in the Taiwan Strait can never be the loss of Taiwan's sovereignty or a

retrogression of Taiwan's human rights. ..."

B) "Clinton Can Usher in Real Change"

Orville Schell, director of the Asia Society's Center on US-China Relations, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (2/20):

"US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is off to China. Her decision to make her first overseas trip to Asia, particularly China, was a smart one and, if done with aplomb, could yield enormous returns for the administration of US President Barack Obama as it attempts to reestablish world leadership. That Clinton chose to go to Asia now, when the US State Department remains unsettled - with no ambassador in Beijing, many old officials having departed or leaving, and many new appointees still unseated - attests to her determination to stake out Asia as her own area. What she brings to this task is openness and an eagerness to construct a new architecture for Sino-US relations. But, even as a host of other issues come into play, strengthening this most important of bilateral relationships requires a new, underlying common interest. Paradoxically, the challenge of climate change is a good place to look. ..."

"As they contemplate this turning point, China's leaders should be aware of how malleable US foreign policy currently is. Although they are accustomed to experiencing the US as a dominant, often censuring 'great power,' the reality now is that the US is beginning not only a new presidential administration, but a whole chapter in its history. ... It is not that former US president George W. Bush's administration left Sino-US relations in such bad repair, but that the possibilities for a substantial change for the better have never been greater. Clinton's openness to new approaches and her early

trip to Beijing provides an incomparable opportunity for Chinese leaders to help make the fight against global climate change - which is perhaps the most important challenge to confront the world in our time - a common odyssey."

WANG